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REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTICES.

Firdusi. Il Libro dei Re. Poema epico recato dal Persiano in versi Italiani da ITALO PIZZI. Torino, Vincenzo Bona, Tipografo di S. M. 8 voll., in-8. 1886-88.

According to the judgment of those who know Oriental poetry best, Firdausi, who has been called the Homer of Persia, is unparalleled among Oriental poets for the depth and vigor of his sentiments as well as for the truly astonishing universality of his genius; and the masterpiece of Persian epic poetry, the *Shâhnâmeh*, or Book of the Kings, which was composed by Firdausi when he was an old man of nearly eighty years, and which reaches backward to the very origins of Old-Îrânian myths and is continued to the conquest of Persia by the Mohammedans, comprising a period of about 2000 years, may well be considered to rival the *Iliad*, the *Nibelungen* and the *Edda*; for, like these national poems, it gives striking expression to the entire life, thought and feeling of a whole nation in the heroic period. The events recorded are not mere inventions, they are historical facts; not, indeed, as they happened in reality, but as they were changed and modelled by the verbal tradition of centuries and millenniums (cf. H. Ethé, *Die höfische und romantische Poesie der Perser*; Hamburg, 1887). That these are ancient stories, events on which time has exercised its reconciling and moderating influence, and which tradition has rendered venerable, gives, indeed, to the epic poem of Îrân a great deal of its power and charm.

Poetical qualities like these have, in the Orient as well as in the Occident, excited the admiration of all those who have engaged in a detailed study of Firdausi's poem. Witness the enthusiastic expressions of Joseph von Hammer concerning Firdausi in his *History of Persian Literature* (p. 50), the high praises bestowed on the poet by the gifted Joseph Görres in the preface of his *Heldenbuch von Iran*, the fine and just observations of Count A. F. von Schack in his excellent translation of the noblest episodes of the *Shâhnâmeh*.

Besides the great number of opinions given by real connoisseurs of Firdausi, I will only name those of two English scholars, as in Europe, at the end of the XVIIIth and beginning of the XIXth century, the interest of scholars was first turned towards Firdausi by the Englishmen Jones and Champion. In the essay on the language and literature of Persia which is prefixed to his book, *The Flowers of Persian Literature*, containing extracts from the most celebrated authors in prose and verse, with a translation into English (London, 1805), S. Rousseau says: "The work of Firdoosee remains entire a glorious monument of Eastern genius and learning; which, if ever it should be generally understood in its original language, will contest the merit of invention with Homer himself, whatever be thought of its subject or the arrangement of its incidents." Malcolm, who formerly was British ambassador

at the court of Teheran and had a thorough knowledge of Persian literature, gives in his *History of Persia*, vol. II, p. 541, the following opinion of Firdausi: "In the noble epic poem of Ferdosi, which has so often been referred to in the early part of the *History of Persia*, the most fastidious European reader will meet with numerous passages of exquisite beauty. The narrative of this great work is generally very perspicuous, and some of the finest scenes in it are described with simplicity and elegance of diction. In the opinion of Persians this poet excels in his description of the combats and battles of his heroes; but to those whose taste is offended with hyperbole, the tender parts of his work will have most beauty, as they are freest from this characteristic defect of Eastern writers. It is, however, to be observed that the most extravagant flights of Ferdosi do not excite that disgust which we receive on a perusal of his countless imitators; for so many of his characters are endowed with supernatural powers that the mind is almost reconciled to hear their deeds related in a language which appears mere bombast when used to describe the actions of beings of an inferior order." (See E. A. Bayer in his introduction to Friedrich Rückert's translation of the *Shâhnâmeh*; Berlin, 1890, pp. xxx-xxxiv.)

In view of the general estimation of Firdausi, it is easily comprehensible that the desire has been felt to translate his poem into other languages, in order to make it accessible to those who were not able to read the original. In the Orient, where the language of Îrân has an importance for intercourse like that of French in Europe, such a desire, indeed, was not felt at first: the *Shâhnâmeh* was everywhere read and recited, and even nowadays the Persians proudly rejoice in hearing these songs, which tell of their nation's former greatness and of the glorious deeds of their ancestors. Nevertheless, as early as the XIIth century the *Shâhnâmeh* was translated into Arabic, in the XVIth century into Turkish, a Hindoustanee version dates from the year 1846, and at this very moment Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, Parsee High-priest at the fire-temple of Colaba, near Bombay, is, as he writes me, about to translate the Persian epopee into Gujarati.

In Europe, Englishmen, and especially Germans, have made a careful study of the *Shâhnâmeh*, and have tried to make it familiar to a more numerous public by translating smaller or greater parts of the poem. Besides the performances of scholars like Lumsden, Macan, Mohl, Vullers, who endeavored to give a critical text of the *Shâhnâmeh*, the Englishman Champion (*Poems of Ferdosi*; Calcutta, 1785) first tried a translation of the poet, which, written in the usual English ballad style, cannot be called a very successful one, but deserves, nevertheless, to be mentioned because Schiller was inspired by it to compose the beautiful riddle-poems of *Turandot*. Görres endeavored in the *Heldenbuch von Eran* (Berlin, 1820, 2 vols.), one of the most meritorious performances of that scholar, to make the myths of the Persian epopee familiar to a more numerous public, but as he only gives a summary of the contents, no sufficient idea can be got of the beauties of the original. Friedrich Rückert gave a proof of his poetical mastership in an episode of our poem (*Rostem und Suhrab*; Erlangen, 1838), but this must be called rather a free, although faithful, imitation of the original than a translation. Hence the criticism of Jules Mohl in the preface to the second volume of his edition of the *Shâhnâmeh*

(Paris, 1842), p. iii, who says: "C'est plutôt un poème sur le même sujet qu'une traduction, car l'auteur suit quelquefois Firdousi mot pour mot, et quelquefois il introduit des chapitres entiers là où le poète persan ne donne qu'une indication." Poetical imitations of this same episode have been tried likewise by two Englishmen: Jam. Atkinson (*Sohrab*, a poem. Freely translated by Atkinson. Calcutta, 1814; *The Shah-Namah of Firdausi*, translated and abridged, in prose and verse, with notes and illustrations. London, 1832) and W. Robertson (*Rostum, Zaloolee and Sohrab*. Text and translation. Calcutta, 1831), which are scarcely calculated to give an idea of the poetical beauty of the original.¹ For the sake of completeness we will not omit to mention the performances of Victor Weiss, von Starkenfels and Theod. Ritter von Schwarzhuber (*Sal und Rudabek*; Wien, 1840. *Kej-kawus in Masenderan*; Wien, 1841). In these works a lyric vagueness is so prevalent that the epic tone, which, after all, is the principal thing, is entirely wanting. In *Heldensagen von Firdusi* (Berlin, 1851) and *Epische Dichtungen von Firdusi* (2 vols., Berlin, 1853), Adolph Friedrich von Schack has confined himself to the prominent heroic tales of the first part, which give a true picture of the spirit and form of the original. Both publications are united in a single work, under the title of '*Heldensagen von Firdusi*' (Berlin, 1865, 3d ed.; Stuttgart, 1877, 3 vols.). Schack's version in iambic pentapodies, with a copious introduction which gives an excellent genesis and characteristic of the poem, is a rare masterpiece of the translator's art. Although entirely faithful in word and form, it is a poetic palingenesis of the original. E. A. Bayer justly says (l. c., Intro., p. xxxvii): "Schack's Uebersetzung ist als eine wahrhafte Bereicherung der deutschen Litteratur zu betrachten, wohl geeignet, allen denen einen hohen Genuss zu verschaffen, welche das Ohr für den Zauber der alten Sagenwelt offen haben und aus Unkenntnis der Sprache doch nicht im Stande sind, sich an den Schönheiten des Originals zu berauschen. Denn was vor von Schack an deutschen Uebersetzungen aus Firdosi's Hauptwerk veröffentlicht worden ist, trägt alles mehr oder weniger den Stempel des Unvollkommenen und teilweise Zerzwungenen, abgesehen davon, dass es sich dabei nur um kleinere Bruchstücke oder Episoden handelt." We now add Friedrich Rückert's posthumous translation of one-half of the *Shāhnāme*, published by the above-named E. A. Bayer, under the title '*Firdosi's Königsbuch* (*Schahname*), übersetzt von Friedrich Rückert. Sage I–XIII' (Berlin, 1890), and furnished with an excellent introduction by the publisher which gives a good survey of Firdausi's biography and bibliography. Rückert's work, in some measure a bequest of the poet and scholar of Neuss to his countrymen, is on the high level of his best productions. Although sometimes inferior to Schack's translation in smoothness and elegance of form, it surpasses Schack in original vigor, in critical acumen and exactness of rendering. In short, all the power and charm of the poet's diction, all his attractive and captivating individuality, mirrors itself in Rückert's version, and the publication of the two volumes not yet printed is eagerly expected.

A translation of the whole *Shāhnāme* is given in the work of Jules Mohl, a noble monument of German assiduity. The title is '*Le livre des rois par Abou'l Kasim Firdousi*, publiée, traduit et commenté par M. Jules Mohl.'

¹ Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* is not to be passed over in this survey.—B. L. G.

Paris, 1838-78. 7 voll., in-folio. The translation was separately published after the death of Mohl, by his widow, under the title 'Le livre des rois par Abou'l Kasim Firdousi, traduit et commenté par Jules Mohl, Membre de l'Institut, Professeur au Collège de France, publié par Mme. Mohl.' I-VII. Paris, 1876-88. In-12.

A recent Italian translation of the whole Shāhnāmeḥ is due to the indefatigable zeal of Professor Italo Pizzi, of Turin. It is the first translation of Firdausi undertaken in Italy, and the only versified one published in Europe, for Mohl's translation is in prose, and Rückert and Count Schack have translated only parts of the Shāhnāmeḥ into German verse. Prof. Pizzi, who, by a series of writings which for the most part refer to Irānian studies, has made himself a name among the Orientalists of Italy,¹ has translated the Shāhnāmeḥ from the first to the last verse and gives also the celebrated satirical verses upon Mahmood of Ghizni, which Firdausi wrote, as Sir John Malcolm says in his History of Persia, etc., vol. II, p. 541, under the impulse of rage and disappointment, and which are only remarkable as they show the keenness with which he felt neglect, and the bitterness of his resentment.

The translation is based upon the text edition of Firdausi by Turner Macan (Calcutta, 1829), but besides Macan the translator has consulted and compared the editions of Jules Mohl, Vullers, and an edition published at Teheran, as well as a manuscript in the Laurentiana at Florence (Catal. Assem. CII 5), and has carefully taken advantage of Rückert's remarks on Mohl's edition of Firdausi in the VIIIth and Xth vols. of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. The preface, which takes up 10 pages, is followed by a short biography of the poet Firdausi and a survey of the poem, treating especially of the heroes mentioned in it (pp. 18-85). The metre *Mutakarib*, employed by Firdausi, has the following scheme:

— — — | — — — | — — — | — —

But Platen, the master of form among German poets, is the only translator who has given an accurate imitation of it, and he only in the opening lines. Rückert and Schack have substituted the iambic pentapody, and Pizzi has followed them. Only he has dropped the rhyme. In Pizzi's translation, then, we have the so-called blank verse, which, after the model of English epic and dramatic poets, especially Shakespeare, was in Germany first employed by Joh. Elias Schlegel, Cronegk and Browe, and which entirely supplanted the monotonous Alexandrine. For epic poetry, blank verse, which, indeed, may be called somewhat dry and barren for this kind of poetry, has not become usual in Germany, and the rhymed pentapody only for certain strophes. At any rate, the iambic pentapody is the basis of the complicated Italian strophes, as the sonnet, stanza (ottave rime), terza, etc., which have enriched the German language with poetical forms as euphonious as they are well adapted for a graceful connection of thought.

¹ Prof. Pizzi has published, among other writings, the following: *Manuale della Lingua Persiana*; Lipsia, 1883. *Dell' Epopea Persiana*; Torino, 1886. *Manuale di Letteratura Persiana*; Milano, 1887. *L' Epopea Persiana e la Vita e i Costumi dei Tempi Eroi di Persia*; Firenze, 1888. *Chrestomathie Persane avec un Abrégé de la Grammaire et un Dictionnaire*; Turin, 1889.

As to the translation of Professor Pizzi, it is perhaps not so concise as those of Rückert and Schack, which follow the original more scrupulously in form and substance. We often meet with a more detailed elaboration of Firdausi's ideas, because Prof. Pizzi always strives to give the sense of each verse with the utmost fidelity. But it has all the advantages that can reasonably be expected from a good version. It is faithful, adequate and elegant. Prof. Pizzi has honestly endeavored to be adequate to the ideal task of every translator: to produce upon a cultivated reader the same impression that the foreign author produces upon those who are able to read him in his native tongue. A perfect likeness of the original, it is true, even the best translation will give only in single passages but not in its totality. The individuality of the reader and the individuality of the translator are necessarily disturbing factors; and even after the most careful study of the conditions of successful translation, it is extremely difficult to be true to them throughout, especially in a poem so copious and so various as Firdausi's *Shâhnâmeh*. We ought the more to yield due praise to Prof. Pizzi's assiduity and talent, who in his translation has always kept this ideal aim in view. To substantiate this opinion, a few passages from several volumes of the translation may be adduced, which at the same time will show the great skill and dexterity of Prof. Pizzi in managing versification.

In the second volume, pp. 350-51, it is told how Siyavish, in order to prove the falsehood of an accusation, submits to the trial by fire and happily stands the ordeal:

Siyavish, come venne là dal fuoco,
 A Dio signore l' intimo pensiero
 Volse del cor. Tu mi concedi, ei disse,
 Almo Signor, per questo monte ardente
 Libero il varco. Sciogli tu dal laccio
 Del padre mio questa persona attrita!
 Poi che in tal guisa egli ebbe pianto assai
 Come nembo di fumo il suo destriero
 Ratto incitò di color fosco. Un grido
 Dalla città, dalla pianura intorno
 Levossi in alto e a la raccolta gente
 Per tant' opra crudel venne rancura.
 Ma Sudàbeh che udì voci dolenti
 Venir dal campo, ad un terrazzo ascese
 Dalle sue stanze. Vide il fuoco, male
 Cercò al prode venisse e fu sdegnosa,
 Atto imprecando. E la gente gli sguardi
 Su re Kàvus tenea fermi e diritti,
 Piena la lingua di parole acerbe,
 Pieno d' un' ira il cor. Di cotal guisa
 Il suo bruno destrier sospinse innanzi
 Principe Siyavish, che dir potevi
 Ch' ei fe' di fuoco il suo destrier. S' avventano
 Da tutte parti l' ignee vampe, e niuno
 Siyavish vide allor, niuno quel suo

Veloce palafren. Tutte nel campo
 Stavan con occhi lagrimosi intorno
 Meste le turbe e si dicean: Deh! come,
 Come uscirà da le voraci fiamme?

Alfin, l' uom generoso e di gran core
 Da le fiamme balzò, le labbra adorne
 D' un bel sorriso, ambe le gote sue
 Qual porporina rosa. Oh! allor che il videro,
 Atto un grido levossi: Ecco! mirate!
 Usci dal fuoco il giovinetto sire!
 Deh! s' erano acque a superar, balzato
 Illeso ei ne saria, nè alcuna piega
 Avrian le vesti sulla sua persona!

Vol. IV, pp. 546-53, we read how Shâh Khosrav, who has renounced the world and his throne, is going to the mountains, accompanied by several of his faithful dignitaries, where a snow-storm buries him, according to the behest of the divinity. Before this catastrophe his afflicted subjects, who sadly follow him on the way, try to keep back their beloved sovereign by touching words, pp. 547-48:

Della montagna su l' aerea cima
 Come il sole apparì, da tutte parti
 Venne del mondo una gran gente. Donne
 Ed uomini d' Irania a centomila
 Giunser piangendo per il loco alpestre
 Col gran monarca, e la montagna tutta
 Risuonava di gemiti e di lai,
 Commoversi parean le dure pietre
 Della rupe scoscesa. O prence, o sire,
 Ciascun dicea, che avvenne mai, se pieno
 È d' affanno e di duol questo tuo core
 Sereno in pria? Se hai tu molesta cura
 Per lo stuol de' tuoi prodi e spregi questa
 Corona imperial, dillo, signore,
 Ma non partirti dall' iranio seggio,
 Al regno antico non donar sovrano
 Che sia novello. Qui noi tutti siamo
 Qual è la polve al piè del tuo destriero,
 Fedeli al Fuoco, qual per te riluce,
 D' Azergashaspe. Ov' è la tua dottrina
 E il tuo consiglio e la tua mente? Un tempo
 Nemmeno a re Fredùn scese dal cielo
 Seròsh beato! Oh! noi dinanzi a Dio
 Adorerem, venerabondi noi
 Starem nel tempio ove risplende vivo
 Il sacro Fuoco, per veder se Iddio
 Santo ha di noi pietà, se ancora al tuo
 Core sacerdotale per noi dà luce!

One of the finest passages in the *Shāhnāmeh* is the narrative of Rustam's death (Pizzi's translation, vol. V, pp. 430-37). The celebrated hero becomes the victim of the perfidious and treacherous designs of the Shāh of Kabul and of his own brother Sheghad. While out hunting he falls, with his war-horse, into a pit filled with swords and spears, and, wounded in his breast and shoulder, painfully extricates himself. His first look falls on his brother Sheghad, whom he reproaches with his treachery. When, after this, the Shāh of Kabul likewise maliciously approaches and addresses compassionate questions to the mortally wounded Rustam, the latter angrily exclaims (p. 434) :

Oh! tu malnato
 E ingannator! gli rispondea quel grande,
 Stagion per me passò ch' io d' uopo avessi
 Di medic' arti! Non versar di pianto
 Quell' atre stille! Chè, se a lungo resti
 Alla vita quaggiù, tocca al suo termine
 Il tempo nostro, e vivo un uom la volta
 Mai del ciel non varcò. Non io mi vanto
 Gloria maggiore di Gemshid; gli aperse
 Il bianco petto con stridente sega
 Il suo nemico; nè son io più illustre
 Di Fredùn, di Kobàd, non de' regnanti
 D' inclita stirpe e gloriosi. Ancora
 Prence Khusrèv trafisse del malvagio
 Afrasyàb la persona, e allor che venne
 Il tempo suo, Gurvi-zirih squarciava
 Con crudo ferro a Siyavish la gola.
 Erano tutti principi d' Irania,
 Erano tutti a le battaglie in mezzo
 Come leoni, e si partìr! Ma noi
 Troppo a lungo restammo, ad un crocicchio
 D' alpestre via come leoni indomiti
 Noi ci tenemmo. Feramùrz, quel mio
 Figlio, diletto a me come degli occhi
 La viva luce, qui verrà per compiere
 La mia vendetta su di te!—

Rustam then asks of his brother to bring him a bow and arrows, that no mischief might happen to him while he was lying defenceless. Sheghad brings the bow, bends it, and is glad in his heart on account of his brother's death. Then the hero, faint and bleeding, seizes the bow and lays an arrow on it. Sheghad, fearing the weapon of his brother and his vengeance, retires hastily behind a tree, but the tree was hollow from age, the hero shoots, and pierces at the same time the tree and the traitor. Once again, in his mortal hour, Rustam's heart is glad and he speaks (pp. 436-37):

Grazia è questa di Dio, che in ogni tempo
 Dio riconobbi, che al fatal momento
 Che l' anima giugnea fino a le labbra
 Per rivolarne a Lui, non venne a sera
 Il dì fatal della vendetta mia!

Forza donasti a me, Signor possente,
 Per ch' io prendessi, de la morte innanzi,
 Su l' infedel la mia vendetta! Intanto
 Perdona a me le colpe mie, tu accogli
 La mia preghiera, chè tu se' di grazia
 Dator sovrano e aiutator. La fede
 Del tuo profeta e la sacrata legge,
 Le tue norme, o Signor, la tua dottrina
 Accolgo in cor. Che se cotesta legge
 Spiritiual, se la santa dottrina
 Guardomi in cor gelosamente, allora
 Che partirà l' anima mia, qual tema,
 Quale sgomento avrò? L' eterna luce
 Dona all' anima mia nel paradiso,
 Chè a te, Signor, l' arcano mio pensiero
 È manifesto e aperto.—Ei così disse,
 E da quel corpo l' anima preclara
 Via si parti.—

What an excellent huntsman the hero Behrâm was and how heartily he enjoyed the chase, we see from the lively descriptions of hunting scenes, vol. VI, pp. 220–25, which may without hesitation be paralleled with similar scenes in Homer and Vergil. P. 223, e. g., it is related how Behrâm, by one happy arrow-shot, kills a lion and a wild ass which are engaged in mortal combat:—

Con una scorta di guerrieri eletti
 Da l' erta fronte, a un' altra settimana,
 Di caccia al loco andò Behrâm con falchi
 E con segugi. Là, vicino a un monte,
 Leone egli vedea che d' un onàgro
 Dilacerava il dorso, e ratto il prode
 All' estremo dell' arco si tendea
 Il nervo e con ardor balzava in sella
 Ed incoccava di tre penne all' arco
 Un dardo acuto. Ei trapassò con quello
 Il core dell' onàgro e del leone
 Il dorso eretto, e di lor sangue intrise
 Restâr le belve, sopra il leon fero,
 L' onàgro sotto a lui, confitti insieme.—

In the concluding verses of the Shâhnâmeh, where the Sultan Mahmûd also is mentioned, who had first discovered in Firdausî the poetical genius capable of praising the deeds of the ancestors in immortal songs, the glorious poet of Tûs gives expression to the high esteem in which he holds himself. They run as follows:

Di re Mahmûd fiorente la persona
 In ogni tempo sia, lieto il suo core,
 Chiara la mente sua! Tanto il lodai,
 Che il detto mio si rimarrà nel mondo
 Eternamente, di secrete cose

Sia ch' ei favelli o di palesi. Laudi
 Ebbi dai prenci un dl, ma più d' assai
 Furon quelle da me già tributate
 Lodi a lui sol fra tutti. In sempiterno
 Viva adunque tal uom saggio e prudente,
 Sempre beato in suo deslo, col core
 Atto al bene operar. Questo mio libro
 Io gli lasciai qual nobile retaggio
 Quando a sci volte diecimila distici
 Ei venne a pareggiar. Ma il tempo intanto
 Il mio lungo parlar, ciò che udir fêi
 Ad altri già, condusse al termin suo,
 Che discendean di giovinezza i giorni
 A vecchia età. Poi che l' inclito libro
 Così venne al suo fin, del verso mio
 Tutta è piena la terra. Ognun che alberga
 Senno e fede e saggezza entro al suo core,
 Mi loderà dopo la morte mia,
 Ned io morirò più mai, ch' io son pur vivo
 Da che il seme gittai di mia parola.

We part from this translation of the whole *Shâhnâmeh* with the expression of our gratitude and delight. While many translations of Oriental poetry are not intelligible when the original is not at hand, or efface the character of the original by arbitrarily suggested traits, Pizzi's translation joins adequateness to poetical beauty, and gives a vivid impression of Firdausi's poem to those also who do not know the original. But the principal reason for the excellence of the translation is simply this: only a man who is himself of a poetical temperament is able to render works of poetry. This seems a matter of course, but has nevertheless often not been heeded in our days.

It is to be hoped that the work of Professor Pizzi will not be confined to the cultivated circles of his own country, but will afford intellectual enjoyment likewise to all those who love the melodious tongue of Italy and who desire to become acquainted with the work of the greatest poet of Persia.

JENA, May 18, 1892.

EUGEN WILHELM.

Was ergibt sich aus dem Sprachgebrauch Xenophons in der *Anabasis* für die Behandlung der griechischen Syntax in der Schule? Ein Beitrag zur Methodik des griechischen Unterrichts, von ARTUR JOOST. Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892.

A great practical problem in Germany is the reduction of the amount of grammar to be learned in the elementary study of Latin and Greek, and each new school-grammar that is put forth bases its claims to acceptance on its success in narrowing the range of inflexion and syntax. Rare forms have been discarded and minute syntactical rules have been suppressed. In Latin, Caesar's *Gallic War* has been analyzed with a view to what is important for the beginner; Caesar, despite the evident drawbacks, being still the beginner's